



General Assembly

Sixtieth session

1st plenary meeting

Tuesday, 13 September 2005, 4 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Eliasson (Sweden)

The meeting was called to order at 5.40 p.m.

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Opening of the session by the President of the General Assembly

The President: I have the honour to declare open the sixtieth session of the General Assembly.

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Minute of silent prayer or meditation

The President: Let me begin by inviting representatives, in accordance with rule 62 of the rules of procedure, to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.

Item 129 of the provisional agenda

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/60/345)

The President: Before turning to the items on our agenda, I should like, in keeping with established practice, to invite the attention of the General Assembly to document A/60/345, which contains a letter from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly in which he informs the Assembly that nine Member States are in arrears in

the payment of their financial contributions to the United Nations within the terms of Article 19 of the Charter.

I should like to remind delegations that, under Article 19 of the Charter,

"A Member of the United Nations which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Organization shall have no vote in the General Assembly if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the preceding two full years."

I should also like to recall for members that the General Assembly, by its resolution 59/312 of 14 July 2005, decided that those nine Member States should be permitted to vote in the General Assembly until the Assembly takes a final decision during the main part of its sixtieth session. This information is duly reflected in document A/60/345.

May I therefore take it that the General Assembly takes note of the information contained in document A/60/345?

It was so decided.

Address by the President

The President: It is a great honour for me to assume the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixtieth session. I thank all members for the trust they have placed in me.

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It is no less an honour for me to succeed President Jean Ping, who has carried a heavy burden of responsibility with grace, warmth and humour over the past year. I want to thank him in particular for his tireless efforts over the past few weeks, which have brought us together not only in work, but also in friendship. I also want to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, who has responded with calm and determination to the difficulties facing the Organization while maintaining a longer-term perspective and a sense of vision, as we saw in his report "In larger freedom" (A/59/2005). I thank them both, on behalf of all of us assembled here today.

It is almost 60 years since the first session of the General Assembly opened. When I read the words of Mr. Zuleta Angel of Colombia — the opening speaker on that occasion — I was struck by their relevance today. He said "the whole world now waits upon our decisions, and rightly — yet with understandable anxiety — looks to us now to show ourselves capable of mastering our problems" (*Official Records of the General Assembly, First part of first session, Plenary Meetings, 1st meeting*).

That was in 1946. Mr. Zuleta Angel spoke of anxiety in the world outside. Today, we know that, 60 years later, we also have reason to feel anxiety and uncertainty about the future.

Members have all worked long and hard, particularly over recent weeks. The process of working on the High-level Meeting outcome document has been intense and all-consuming. The reform programme we have been considering has been the most ambitious and wide-ranging since the formation of the United Nations. Expectations around the world have — again, as in 1946 — been exceptionally high. Our discussions have not always been easy. The issues have been difficult and have, for many members, touched upon important national interests.

As a result of that process, we have now received from the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session a comprehensive draft High-level Meeting outcome document. I welcome it as a strong basis for the process of reform which we will take forward in the sixtieth session.

Tomorrow, we begin that process. I expect that, at the High-level Meeting, our leaders will add political momentum and set the waymarks for the road ahead. We will need to listen carefully to them and to the

expectations of their people. On Friday, as our leaders are invited to adopt the outcome document, we should take stock of what we have heard.

And on Saturday, when we know the mandate our leaders have given us, we should start the urgent task of translating their words into action. I shall revert to that when we open the general debate. I am confident that the debate, which will focus on follow-up and implementation of the High-level Meeting, will provide further concrete ideas and proposals for our work ahead.

At the end of the general debate, I intend to reflect further on the situation and present to the Assembly an outline of work for the year ahead. That goes both for the regular work of the General Assembly, including revitalization, and for keeping up the momentum of the reform process.

When we go into that work, we should be reminded of two important realities: one, the expectations and dreams of our peoples for this Organization, our United Nations; the other, the sombre realities in this world, which we must also feel in these halls.

The people we serve have expected a lot of us. That is, in part, a tribute to civil society and to the many commissions, panels and projects that have done much to build momentum for progress on development, peace and security and human rights.

It also reflects the fact that we are clearly not making fast enough progress with regard to many of the commitments we have already made — not least, in the case of development, the Millennium Development Goals. I believe it is also because the peoples of the world can see that a reinvigorated United Nations and a renewed commitment to multilateralism are in all of their interests. And they can see that we have to act now to get it right.

Why do they see international cooperation as important? Perhaps because it is now so apparent that the world's problems — the realities that I spoke of — are so complex and interlinked. As Dag Hammarskjöld once said, the nerve signals from a wound in the world are felt at once through the body of mankind.

The tsunami in Asia had a devastating impact on people in the region, but the effects were also felt — in different ways — around the world. The recent disaster on the Gulf coast of the United States has further reminded us that no nation — no nation — is immune

from natural disasters and environmental threats. And the terrorist attack on New York four years ago this week, and the number of abhorrent terrorist attacks all over the world in recent years, remind us that no nation — again, no nation — can be immune to threats to its security in today's world.

It is also increasingly clear that we need a renewed multilateralism to tackle the many silent tsunamis of disease and poverty which are killing hundreds of thousands of our fellow human beings. As an anti-poverty campaign reminded us this year, a child dies somewhere in the world as a result of preventable — I repeat: preventable — poverty every three seconds. That is unacceptable.

Meanwhile, although the number of active conflicts in the world is in decline, there remain too many people whose lives are ravaged by war or who live in countries which are struggling to recover from conflicts. To help those people build peace must be our common cause.

The world also needs to deal with the global challenges of disarmament and non-proliferation and to prevent and resolve conflict. We need to get better at detecting the early signs of human rights abuses and coming together to address them. And we need to reflect on why an Organization which was set up to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war — as the beautiful Charter puts it — has been unable to prevent ethnic cleansing, mass killings and even genocide. It is time for us all to stop saying "Never again".

To deal with all these realities, we must reform the way this Organization functions. That will be an ongoing endeavour, but also an urgent one. We owe it to those we serve to ensure that our management, oversight and accountability systems are of the highest possible calibre.

I believe that all of these issues give us, the General Assembly, real reasons and impetus to rally together. Tackling global poverty, addressing climate change, fighting terrorism and protecting human rights: these are not issues that only one group or one region has an interest in resolving. They are issues that each and every one of us has a duty to resolve together, in the spirit of the best traditions of the United Nations: transparency, civility and mutual respect. At the same time, we need to strive for efficiency and a sense of purpose.

So, in closing, we have all worked exceptionally hard. Some of us will have, for the first time in a long while, a full night's sleep — unless our leaders keep us busy. The world's expectations are high. We will go into the High-level Meeting and await our leaders' direction and vision. Recognizing the responsibility history has placed on us to shape the future for all our peoples, we must all move forward, together, with renewed energy and with renewed determination.

Let us not underestimate what we can do. The world's poorest, the world's least secure, the world's most oppressed demand change. Let us show them what we can do.

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

Credentials of representatives to the sixtieth session of the General Assembly

(a) Appointment of the members of the Credentials Committee

The President: Rule 28 of the rules of procedure provides that the General Assembly at the beginning of each session shall appoint, on the proposal of the President, a Credentials Committee consisting of nine members.

Accordingly, it is proposed that, for the sixtieth session, the Credentials Committee should consist of the following Member States: Cameroon, China, Panama, Portugal, Saint Lucia, Samoa, Sierra Leone, the Russian Federation and the United States of America.

May I take it that those States are hereby appointed members of the Credentials Committee?

It was so decided.

Item 7 of the provisional agenda

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

Letter dated 8 September 2005 from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences addressed to the President of the General Assembly (A/60/344)

The President: Members are aware that, pursuant to section 1, paragraph 7, of General Assembly

resolution 40/243, no subsidiary organ of the General Assembly should be permitted to meet at United Nations Headquarters during the main part of a regular session of the Assembly, unless explicitly authorized by the Assembly. Authorization is thus sought for the subsidiary organs listed in the letter, on the strict understanding that meetings would have to be accommodated within available facilities and services.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to authorize those subsidiary organs of the Assembly listed in the letter from the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences to meet during the main part of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly?

It was so decided.

The President: I now wish to bring to the attention of the Assembly a matter relating to item 111 of the provisional agenda of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, entitled "Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization".

Pursuant to paragraphs 4 and 10 of resolution 51/241 of 31 July 1997 and as at previous sessions, the Secretary-General wishes to make a brief presentation of his annual report as the first item on the morning of Saturday, 17 September, prior to the opening of the general debate.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees that, under item 111 of the provisional agenda, the Secretary-General will make a brief presentation of his annual report as the first item on the morning of Saturday, 17 September, prior to the opening of the general debate?

It was so decided.

The President: Next, I would like to invite the attention of members to a few organizational matters concerning the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly of September 2005, which will take place from 14 to 16 September in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 58/291 of 6 May 2004, 59/145 of 17 December 2004 and 59/291 of 15 April 2005, under item 48, "Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields", and item 121, "Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit", of the provisional agenda of the sixtieth session.

Owing to the importance of the High-level Plenary Meeting, the head of State of the country of the

President of the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session and the head of Government of the country of the President of the Assembly at its sixtieth session will jointly preside over the three-day High-level Plenary Meeting.

The High-level Plenary Meeting is composed of six plenary meetings, on the basis of two meetings a day, as well as four interactive round-table sessions. Each round table will cover the entire agenda of the High-level Plenary Meeting and will be held in parallel with a plenary meeting.

With the exception of the morning plenary meeting of Wednesday, 14 September 2005, which shall be held from 9 to 10 a.m., the remaining morning plenary meetings shall be held from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and the afternoon plenary meetings from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.

At the opening meeting, tomorrow morning, the first speakers will be the two Co-Chairpersons of the High-level Plenary Meeting, the Secretary-General and the head of the delegation of the host country of the Organization.

In order to accommodate all the speakers at the High-level Plenary Meeting, statements — and this is important — should not exceed five minutes. A lighting system will be installed to assist us in this respect.

Within the framework of the High-level Plenary Meeting, the Assembly will hold a separate meeting on financing for development on 14 September 2005, immediately following the adjournment of the opening plenary meeting of the High-level Plenary Meeting.

In order to accommodate all the speakers at this separate meeting, statements — and this, again, is important — should not exceed three minutes. In view of the time pressure for the High-level Plenary Meeting and also for the separate meeting on financing for development, I strongly appeal to participants to fully respect the time limit apportioned for each statement.

As for the four round-table sessions, they will be chaired as follows: Wednesday, 14 September, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., chaired by His Excellency The Honourable John Howard, Member of Parliament, Prime Minister of Australia; Thursday, 15 September, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., chaired by His Excellency Mr. Aleksander Kwasniewski, President of the Republic of Poland; Thursday, 15 September, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., chaired by His Excellency The Honourable Winston Baldwin Spencer, Prime Minister of Antigua and

Barbuda; and Friday, 16 September, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., chaired by His Excellency Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

I should further like to inform members that the round-table sessions will take place in Conference Rooms 5 and 6. Each head of State or head of Government or head of delegation attending the round-table session may be accompanied by no more than two advisers owing to the strict limitation of space. Accredited delegates and observers not attending the round-table sessions will be able to follow the proceedings of the round-table sessions via a closed-circuit television in the overflow room, that is, in Conference Room 3.

Holy See participation in the work of the General Assembly

The President: I should now like to draw the attention of representatives to a matter concerning the participation of the Holy See, in its capacity as an Observer State, in the sessions and work of the General Assembly.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 58/314 of 1 July 2004, and the note by the Secretary-General contained in document A/58/871, the Holy See, in its capacity as an Observer State, will participate in the work of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly with no further need for a precursory explanation prior to any intervention.

Palestine participation in the work of the General Assembly

The President: I should also like to draw the attention of representatives to a matter concerning the participation of Palestine, in its capacity as observer, in the sessions and work of the General Assembly.

In accordance with General Assembly resolutions 3237 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974, 43/177 of 15 December 1988 and 52/250 of 7 July 1998, and the note by the Secretary-General contained in document A/52/1002, Palestine, in its capacity as observer, will participate in the work of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly with no further need for a precursory explanation prior to any intervention.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.